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THE MIDDLE MILES

By LEE WILSON DODD

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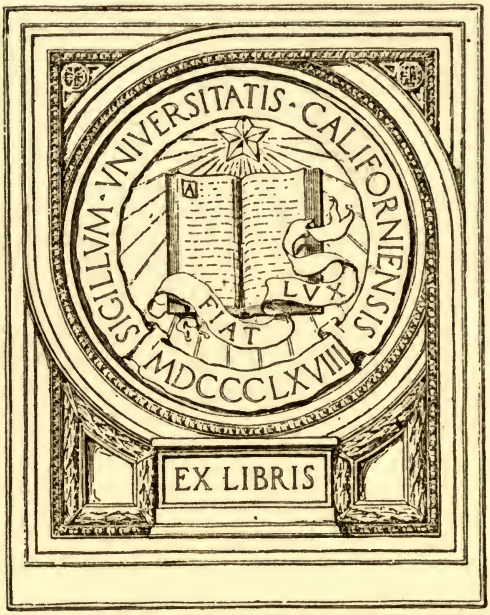
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THE MIDDLE MILES

AND

OTHER POEMS

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OTHER POEMS

BY

LEE WILSON DODD

New Haven: Yale University Press

MDCCCCXV

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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To the editors of *Poetry, The Atlantic Monthly, The Yale Review, The Century Magazine, The Forum, The Outlook, The Metropolitan,* and *The American Magazine,* thanks are due for kind permission to reprint certain of the following verses.

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DEDICATION

red claims of mind
wife, in closer, sweeter,
ness than aught else of worth,
loes unite us.... Now let us sit
led lamp and turn
ages, and retincture
es, or such vagrom moods
he vision-words of song:
orth our own hid dreams
g speech; or question
f-answer—seeking truth.
eet grandly. More august
y thought's graver train:
tiful and more safely strong,
rless at the gates of Change—
single gate of Death.

THE MIDDLE MILES

(*to* H. S. C.)

Thirty-five years is not very long —
Just half or more of the way to death:
But the sultry middle miles of the way
Are alien miles to the heart of song.
For in youth we sing, and in age we pray,
Sing with the gold locks, pray with the gray;
But the middle miles dustily choke the breath
Of singer and saint as they strain and plod
On, on....
In the noon of strife, the tropics of life,
On....
Unassuaged of the clear cool carolling dawn,
Or the cool clear coronal stars of God.

Yet the middle miles in the drouthy plain,
Twixt the towers of Heaven and towers of Spain,
Measured miles of patience and pain —
O friend! —
Because we have gladly through the smother
Called " Is it well with thee, my brother? "
Because we remember young April's rain,
May-tide flowers, June's volatile sweetness,
And dare to know we shall know again
Joy, but joy in a grave completeness;
Because, though faint, we hold the track,
Nor falter, nor turn back —
O friend! —

TO*****

It is our faith the middle miles must end.
For the dread parching wind that dries
Even the healing of tears from our eyes
Wafteth stealthily now and again
Intangible prophecies . . . .
Yea, the dread desert sand-wind blows,
Beareth from afar to our yearning ken,
Not now, but now and then,
Furtive, the tenuous breath of a ghostly rose.

TO*****

Dear little boy, whose parents give
Their hearts to you each hour afresh,
Within whose tiny life they live
Commingled, in whose radiant flesh

Invisible fingers shape anew
Your father's eyes, your mother's smile,—
This grown-up song I sing for you
Is lonely for a little while.

And lonely songs are often sad:
So when you come upon my song
After long years, dear little lad,
Remember it has waited long.

Remember then how patiently
My song has tarried till you grew
Aware of a grave melody
Your father and your mother knew.

And though far other songs resound
About you then, bold ballads, cries
Of passionate yearning, a sharp sound
Of jubilant voices! though your eyes

See only color and strong lights
Shining, and though your eager tongue
Must clamor for youth's golden rights . . .
Dear God! Remember *we* were young!

We have but passed before you, child:
Have pity on us! If I sing
Too sadly, O be reconciled
A little moment! Then take wing.

On to your world which is not ours,
On to your rapture and your pain! . . .
We too have seen hope's roseate towers
Lift o'er the moated walls of Spain.

INCOGNITA

Tiny Unknown, who yet shall be so near,
To this starv'd haven by what wild tempest flung,

INCOGNITA

Driving o'er alien seas,—
Welcome! O be thou welcome and trebly dear!
A forward spring, brisking the sullen year
From its bleak thoughts and rude
Loveless decrepitude,
Lonely in harsh distrust....
O be thou, child, our hoped Hesperides,
Our dreamed-of songs unsung,
Fresh showers where all was dust!
Come, as a bluebird in April's trancèd dawn
Flies to the winter-empty, preparate nest,
And settling thereupon,
After long flight from dim lands undescried
Tarries and takes sweet rest,
Possessing, and possessed
Of them whose longing lured, held, nor would be denied.

So shall this dull November burgeon blithe
With more than Maytime joyance, so shall we
Sing with the Sower and forget his scythe —
Too long our emblem for Life's husbandry:
And though the leaf drifts from the parent tree,
And though the first flakes scatter down the lane,
Thy helplessness brings more of ecstasy
Than bird or bud or blossom or honey-bee!
Thy very weakness a strong mystery ....
Love's bond upon our hearts that setteth free,
Yet seemeth to restrain.

TO DORIS

I

How weak those dear, uncertain hands
Held with spread fingers, baby-wise;
And how their helpless quest commands
Such service as no master buys!

What do you seek, my darling? Toys?
The red fish? the green frog? the blue
Rabbit, whose color-scheme destroys
No whit the gravity in you?

Take them. You scarce can hold them yet . . .
But can a grown-up father hold
His toys more firmly? No, my pet;
His grasp too falters, uncontrolled.

Ah, would that he might feel, how near!
A loving Father with kind eyes
And patient hands, how firm to steer
Weak, wavering fingers toward their prize.

Could he thus feel, he would not dread
Days he must dream of, when no more
Green frog, blue rabbit, fish of red,
Will be the toys you hanker for:

TO DORIS

Days when, a woman grown, you long
For love, for beauty, for delight . . .
And find your arms, that seem so strong,
Too frail to guard them from the night.

II

Dear baby, I do ill to raise
The old, grim questions by your side:
Rather, my kindling song should praise
Life, by your rare smile deified.

Your palms like pansies brush my cheek,
Your flax-blue eyes meet mine and rest
Long moments, trustfully; you seek
Love that is sure and self-confessed.

And it may be your maiden heart
Will seek no love that is not yours
Before the asking — sealed apart
For you. Such love for aye endures.

Endures for life, and, it may be,
Endures beyond this life of care:
The stars a blind man does not see
Are no less infinitely there.

MAN'S SONG AND WOMAN'S

All along the meadow and up the little hill
Golden ripples in the wheat travel to the blue!
Woman, woman, if I run following my will,
Where shall I find you, whither fare with you?

Find me—ask not where,
Take me where you will,
Take me over seas,
For the world is old;
And my heart grows cold,
And weary are my knees,
And I wait white and still,
In the shadow of my hair!

Woman, woman, woman, what is this you say?
Are you not the loveliest, gayest of the gay?
Do you not dance, do you not sing,
With your hair burning round you in a red-gold ring?
Do you not sing, do you not dance,
Till the sun bows before you and the stars advance,
Till the moon courtseys to you, the stars on silver feet
Pirouette in heaven to pleasure you, my sweet?

These are but words,
And my heart needs fire—
Find me, find me,
Turn not, nor tire!

WAS IT A LEAF—?

These are but words,
And my heart needs life—
Find me, find me,
Make me your wife!

All along the meadow and up the little hill,
Sudden ripples in the wheat travel to the blue!
Woman, woman, if I run following my will—
Shall I seek, shall I find you, shall I stay with you?

WAS IT A LEAF—?

We have a fast retreat,
A trysting-place for dreams,
Félise and I.
Often we creep there from that myriad eye,
The Argus-world; there in enfolded calm,
Inviolable, complete,
Our sheltered spirits meet;
We speak as fancy wills, as fancy wills reply.
The right sun loiters by,
A golden youth floating in azure waves,
Warming our deep air-caves,
Green, green below him, with his godlike smile.
The faultless silence saves
Our overwrought time-harried souls, and peace
(Her voice among the trees
Scarce heard)
Rewards our daring indolence awhile.

Was it a leaf that stirred?

"Think"—is the voice not mine?—
"Think of imperious labors left behind:
To dream of toil forsaken is the best
Gift of the dream-god—Rest.
Even as Lucretius found it, shall we find
The sight of conflict from our coigne apart;
The memory of that fray
Which stunned us yesterday
Soothes, a deft handmaid of impassive art;
And tumults we decline
(Ah! were they ever mine!)
Are hung like arras round cool chambers of the heart."
Thus my meandering word
Moves whimsically; Félise
Smiles to the wiser trees.

Was it a leaf that stirred?

"Think"—is the voice not hers?—
"Think of stark passions in the days to be;
Think of the unreached goal, the pitiless rivalry
No quiescence deters.
Is it not lovelier so to half-forsake with me
The future and its fate?
Now while the crises wait,
Covert assassins down a road that lies

THE DANCER

Too far from paradise,
Now let us mock them with voluptuous scorn;
Now let us mock all evil things unborn,
Smiling from languid eyelids toward that morn,
Inevitable, tho' late,
Bringing us secretly grief's last malign surprise.
Here all save beauty dies,
And we embrace the immortal mood of death,
Knowing that mood deferred."
Thus her deep trancèd word
Droops on a restful breath.

Was it a leaf that stirred?

THE DANCER

I dance—who would live for a season
Before all living be past,
I dance to a rhyme without reason,
In the sweeping rhythm, the vast
Pulse at the heart of all living,
Yea, throb with that pulse as the sea,
Neither giving nor sadly misgiving,
Throbs, nor is free!

Lo, I move in the Dance to the beating
Of ominous drums, to the cry
Of fifes, to the viols repeating

Rapt prayers for all passions that die;
Borne afar in the flow of the measure,
Keeping time to the tread of the years,
With a bow as I pass to young pleasure
Who smiles through her tears.

For the intricate figures are woven
Of change, without pause or delay;
Comes a clatter of hoofs that are cloven;
They clash and they patter away,
And lightly race white-footed slender
Girls, and they laugh and retire
Leaving many a foot-trace and tender
Trod leaf in the mire.

Or threading the pattern unbroken,
The rhythmical pattern of change,
Pacing gravely to solemn words spoken
Of mysteries sombre and strange,
I cross in the movements appointed,
Cross slowly with faltering glance,
The Shining Ones, mystic, annointed —
High Priests of the Dance.

For they chaunt of a Pattern unchanging
Though woven of change, and their eyes
Are steady, where other eyes ranging
Are fearful, or blank with surprise;

And they move without fluttering pulses
And the measure they tread is a song
That neither uplifts nor convulses,
But soothes and is strong.

Yet they pass and repass, and about them
More maddening music disturbs
The flamey-eyed Maenads who flout them,
The Fauns that no gravity curbs;
And my laughter rings loud in the revels
As I fling high my heels and break through
Where the tossing of brown arms dishevels
The garlanded crew!

O dancers, whose dance is a questing,
Sad dancers, mad dancers, and ye
Whose majestical motion no jesting
Can rob of calm power,— unto me
No one tune was set; I must mingle
With all, dance with all, till I find
One Thought, one Desire that is single,
One Love that is kind.

MIRELLA DANCES

I

Sadie Bimberg—that's her name
Down in Houston Street;

And her brother, Isidore,
With his family—wife, and four—
Lives there now, unknown to fame:
He sells Kosher meat.

Sadie used to work
In Lasalle's department store;
Wasn't thirteen when she started
(White and scrawny, with big eyes
Black and lustrous, and black hair
In two pig-tails tied with red;
Over-tall and under-fed!)
On the dubious ascent
Toward a living wage . . . But shirk—
Always, from the very first—
All she durst!
Dared to dream she wasn't meant
To live in a tenement,
Help her mother pay the rent:
"What a foolishness," thought Sadie,
"I was born to be a lady!"

So a little past sixteen
Sadie disappeared.
"On the streets—that's where she'll end,"
Said each reassuring friend
To the little crooked mother
Brooding on a fate she feared.

"Sadie always was that mean!"
Grumbled Isidore, the brother,
Plucking at his silky beard . . .

II

Out from the wings, half-shy, as half-afraid,
Timidly poised as if for startled flight,
Fawn-like she steps, and round her hesitant feet
Lurks the charmed circle of the calcium light.
A moment thus, as by her fears delayed,
She harkens—dryad!—to the sensuous beat
Of savage rhythms, then half-emboldened sways
A little from the hips, and then more bold,
No longer she delays—
Maenad!—but with fierce glee and sensual glance,
Lithe, amorous, ecstatic, uncontrolled—
Leaps to the footlights in tempestuous dance.
And they who sit within the darkened hall
Feast quick insatiate eyes and smite their hands
When breathless, brazen, palpitant she stands
Before the curtain for her twentieth call.
Twice daily this her triumph, and she knows
The only world she knows is at her feet! . . .

"Mirella" is the name of Broadway's rose:
They called her Sadie down in Houston Street.

NIGHT ARMIES

The street is gray with rain,
  The gutters run surcharged. All night
I heard war-chariots sweep the plain
  In one long-rolling wave of fight.

Now it is dawn, and I can see
  No battle wreck, no littered plain:
Where do wild night-armies flee?—
  The street is gray with rain.

And down the street an ash-cart jolts
  Ponderous, and I turn away . . .
God, how the ghost in man revolts
  Against the day!

WASTE

(*To F. P. A.—September 1914*)

Men of practised hand,
Men of subtle wit,
Men of curious skill,
Side by side they stand
(O the waste of it!)
At the War Lord's will;
Side by side they lie
Under a calm sky—
Waiting a command:

Ah! it comes at last . . .
Kill—
Forget the past—
Kill!

It is not yours to weave,
Or bake, or brew;
I order you to cleave
And burn and hew!
Forward, 'tis yours to fell
Or, fighting, fall;
To question is not well—
Obey my call!

You, with the student's face,
The thoughtful brow,
It is not yours to trace
The annals of the race,
Or ponder now
Man's lineage from the brute—
'Tis yours to shoot!

You, there, in shadow! Joy-maker? Put by
Your happy dreams!
Singer, what need have I
For aught save the harsh cry
Of hate? And you, loved poet, you it seems
Must stop one bullet to fulfil my schemes—
'Tis yours to die.

You, man of science, haste! It matters not
That you have left behind
No fellow master of your patient thought,
No equal power of mind.
Have you not heard
My word?
Then heed
My need!
For I am pledged to feed
With blood yon cannon's shot . . .
Forward! Can you not bleed?

Ye, taught to build, tear down!
Ye, taught to plant, uproot!
Genius or gibbering clown,
I care not—so ye shoot
Straight, and press on! 'Tis mine
To give the sign.

Chance atoms in my hand,
Scarce recking whence ye came,
I fling ye forth like sand
Into the eyes of Truth!
Ye are young? But what is youth?
Ye are famous? What is fame,
Till I have dared and won,
Or risking all have lost
(To-morrow's be the cost!),
My triumph in the sun?

IN MEMORIAM

NOTRE DAME DE RHEIMS, SEPTEMBER 1914

Men raised thee with loving hands;
Thy stones, more precious than gems,
They wrought for a Light to the Lands;
Now the Light of all Lands condemns
Hun and Vandal and Goth
Who serve the Lords of the Night,
Who have turned the coat of their troth
And darkened Our Lady of Light.

Men made thee beautiful, yea
Their hearts flowed out as they wrought;
Thou wast builded not for a day,
For an age thou wast builded not:
And they carved thy portals and towers
For peer and burgher and clown,
That the Book of Our Lady's Hours
Might endure tho' the sun burned down.

By the grace of thy ruined rose,
By the sullied strength of thy towers,
Thou shalt triumph, Lady! Thy foes
Shall cower as the hunted cowers.
Thou hast not fallen in vain—
Fallen? Thou canst not fall:
They shall crave thy pity in pain,
Who flung thee hate for a pall.

THANKSGIVING DAY

(*November,* 1914)

Mild the air; the lifeless grass
Is powdered with wan gold;
Wraith-like the shadows pass;
The world seems old,
Old, and a little tired, yet somehow sweet
With the dry sweetness of resigned decay;
The sky is cloudless, but the sky is gray.

Peace. It is peaceful here; and peace is well—
Even the feeble peacefulness of age;
From the far village sounds a solemn bell . . .
Peace. Let the heathen rage.

Soon in the village church good folk will praise
The Lord of Israel for gifts of corn,
For bounteous harvests over all the land,
Pale wheat and tawny maize,
Poured from His casual horn.

I see the elders stand
With fixed, unquestioning eyes; I hear them raise
Strained, quavering voices in a passionless psalm . . .
Thou givest bread, O God, and length of days;
We magnify Thy name! . . . 'Tis strangely calm
This strange Thanksgiving morn.

DE GUSTIBUS . . .

. . . . . Or do I dream?
Do I but dream these muted hours of gold?
Shall I awake, upstarting with a scream,
To hear again that murderous thunder rolled
Over the sleety wold?
Christ! how they spit and gleam
Out of the bitter night, those guns! Squat low,
My brothers, hug your icy trench till dawn!
With the first light may it be ours to go
Forward, if . . .

No!

'Twas but the corner of some vast curtain drawn
A heart-beat! swift it closes . . . and I see
Only pale fields that lie in revery,
Hushed,—and more near to me,
A patient nuthatch exploring spirally,
Head-downward, my most ancient apple-tree;
While five nun-hooded juncos busily
Inspect the meagre seed-plot of my lawn.

DE GUSTIBUS . . .

"Five hundred slain"
(Round numbers have a way
Of muffling up the nerves) . . .
Last night a mother-hungry woman lay
Wasting her longed-for pain
To bring forth a dead child . . .

A slight twig swerves
One ill-aimed bullet, and it stops a heart . . .
Dark Plotter of these never-closing curves,
I—long unreconciled—
Tremble before, but envy not your Art.

CUI BONO—?

(*May*, 1915)

You have not seen my iris garden . . . There,
As May melts into June, the tall stalks lift
Light crowns of madder, violet, amber-rose,
Pearl-white, or opaline-azure; and they glow—
Glow as with heart-held radiance, lantern-flowers
Lifted on slender lances! Could you see them,
As now I see them, you would catch breath and dream
Of celestial armies conquering for love, by love—
And not for hate, by hate . . . And so, having felt
That sudden lump sheer beauty sets in the throat,
Having briefly dreamed—What then?
Why, then, perhaps,
You would say, as now I say: *"The world's no place*
For flowers, or those who tend them. What's the news?"

INTERVAL

I

Mildly the muted sun-rays pause
On yonder seaward-sloping hill:
The world is still, my heart is still . . .
Veiled and unveiled in amber-dusky gauze
Loose-limbed September lies,
Near to a pulseless sea,
Staring on vacancy
With unperceiving, weary-lidded eyes.
Unfelt, her passionless lover for a space,
I am content to trace
The subtle line, the reticent, meagre grace
Of her brown slender body. I could die
Unmoved, unnoted, as the last light dies,
Musing of her tired wantonness,
Her sullen, wistful face.
Stripped of desire am I,
And would not press,
Even if I might, my lips to the tawny tress,
That heavy-stranded tress,
Languid along her archèd shoulder. . . Yet,
O all-unconscious one,
Not soon, not ever shall I now forget
Life's hush when I have loved without desire
Thee, gypsy, brooding in the pale, pale fire
Of the withdrawing sun.

II

Life to the poet is desolating rapture,

Ineffable bright pain, lovely despair,
Dark joy; to him nothing is single, naught
Fluxes to clearness in his turbulent thought:
He finds not anywhere
The simple heart's unvexed limpidity;
Nor, though he strain beyond the stars to capture
The vast repose of Godhead, may he wing
Serene amid the silences. . . . For he
Is the spoiled child of the Earth-Mother: cling
He must about her though he wander far!
His soul is alien to a purer star.
Her ancient trouble brought him forth, her grim
Travail,—he wearies of the seraphim
And the unvarying peace whereof they sing.

III

Yet it is well for him
If suavely, unrestrainedly,
The ever-harrowed sea
Lie for a drawn breath fallow, and the night
Seem severed by a held breath from the day,
And song's lone agitations ebb away
Ere that deep breath suspires
To loose the charmèd light,
And life is a dull'd harp with slackened wires
Wherefrom love's fingers slip, nor seek to play.
Thus, only thus, within a held breath's span—
The poet's unregarded holiday—

BALLAD OF ONE AWAKE

May he no more be more and less than man:
Thus only for a fugitive interlude
May rest, rest. . . .
Like thee, September, passive on Earth's breast,
Thy wanton heart subdued
By a chance dream of God's pure quietude.

BALLAD OF ONE AWAKE

No, no—I will not sleep; not yet . . the night is cool;
I will sit open-eyed and dream wild dreams of you,
I will sit open-eyed and dream your heart was true,
Dream that you did not play the jade, nor I the fool. . .

Was it yesterday or a year,
Alas,
The year-long days and the day-long years!
Was it yesterday or a year ago
I felt you pass?
But I really know
The hour, and the very tint of the grass
Along the hill as you came to me;
The very tint of grass I see
In the elvish afterglow.

You came to me, you came to me,
But came with undelaying feet,
Too sure, too perilously complete

In unpersuasive sympathy.
And the first word you spoke was dead,
Dead as the dead dream in your heart,
And all your ecstasy of art
Could not make live the word you said. . .
That word was *"love"*,
But without breath
It failed and fluttered not . . Enough!
That word was *"death"!*

I knew it "death" and read it "life",
I held you in my arms as wife,
And in my arms as wife you lay
Many a night—and many a day
You clung about me like surprise
Held captive willingly, like joy
Self-lured to linger, and your eyes
Seemed far too tender to destroy
(Dim as they were, or seemed, with bliss),
And there was moonlight in your kiss!

Suddenly you kissed me not,
Suddenly caressed me not;
Ah, sweet, since you missed me not,
In mercy, sweet, molest me not!
Let me not weep,
Let me forget,
Leave to me sleep!
And yet . . .

BALLAD OF ONE ASLEEP

No, no, I will not, must not sleep . . the night is cool;
I will rage open-eyed and shape mad dreams of you;
I will sit open-eyed and dream your heart was true,
Dream that you did not play the jade, nor I the fool.

BALLAD OF ONE ASLEEP

The night I died was very still,
Frost-still and hushful as a ghostless grave:
I stood up naked on a naked hill,
Free, beautiful, and brave.
Over me were familiar stars,
Below in the hollow a half-remembered light—
And known and tried shone the steep path to Mars,
As I lifted from the night!

Yea, known and tried seemed wheresoe'er I sped,
Known, tried, and excellent;
I wondered not at my new hardihead
In God's new element.
I rose upon eternity
Like a still flame,
And the eternal was a home to me,
And a recovered name.

But in my spaceless orbiting I passed
One spot of dread,
One alien spot of terror, and at last
It drew and fixed me by a pallet-bed:

Clay moulded in my likeness lay on it,
And a tortured form of clay,
Young harrowingly, by that poor shape did sit
And weep alway.

It irked me that so frail a thing
Should bend thus in perplexing grief, whilst I
Balanced on flamey wing . . .
Therefore I helped her die;
And she swept to me on the naked hill
And stood up by my side,
And the night, ere we rose from it, was still
As the night when I died.

FIRE FLIES

Out from under the eaves
I look to a world of leaves;
Dark are the leaves, dark
Is the sultry park.
The tree-toads thrill and shrill
From the swamp-land under the hill:
My heart is heavy . . .
Mark!
Spark following liquid spark,
Blue with a glint of green,
Green with a glint of blue . .
Now a dozen, now one or two,
Now an hundred may be seen

BY A NAMELESS GRAVE

Crossing with briefest fire
The hot still curtain of night . .
They gleam . . vanish . . gleam . .
Impalpable as a dream . .
Bright . . for a moment . . bright . .

Brief . . brief . . frail . .
Yet comes their energy
From the central Fire, the Flame
No tongue can name!
'Tis the Fire that burns in me,
Burns for a moment ere I
Yield to the dark and die . . .

BY A NAMELESS GRAVE

They laid you here one day—
Man, woman, child—?
And then they went their way,
Grieving a little, most of them, no doubt:
For it were strange if you had none to grieve
A little—stranger if they mourned you long . . .
Life must be lived, and so it comes that we
Are quickly "reconciled".
We dare not leave
The highway or the throng,
Nor stepping out
Into some place of silence, privily,
Keep tryst with memory,—

We dare not weep apart,
Lest other tongues outbid us in the mart
For gold and golden trappings and gay leisure,
For opal moments and marmoreal hours,
Laurel and pompous flowers,
And all the lusted braveries of pleasure.

Man, woman, child—?
They did not cut your name
In the plain headstone leaning to its fall.
They spared you that poor mockery of fame . . .
I may not guess at all
Your form or features, or your tale of days.
Peace and farewell—unenvied, undefiled,
Exempt from casual blame,
Or casual praise.

THE TEMPLE

Hear me, brother!
Boldly I stepped into the Temple,
Into the Temple where the God dwells
Veiled with Seven Veils,
Into the Temple of Unbroken Silence:
And my joyous feet shod with crimson sandals
Rang out on the tesselated pavement,
Rang out fearlessly
Like a challenge and a cry!
And there—in that shrouded solitude,

THE TEMPLE

There—before the Seven Veils,
There—because of youth and youth's madness,
Because of love and love's unresting heart,
There did I sing three songs!
And my first song praised the eyes of a wanton;
And my second song praised the lips of a wanton;
And my third song praised the feet of a dancing girl!

Thus did I desecrate the Temple,
Thus did I stand before the Seven Veils,
Proudly!
Thus did I wait upon the God's Voice—
Proudly!—
And the sudden shaft of death . . .

But no Voice stirred the Seven Veils,
Though I stood long . . .

And my knees shook,
My bones were afraid . . .

Swiftly I loosed the crimson sandals,
And, tearing them from off my feet,
Crept shuddering forth!

Hear me, brother!
Now am I as one stricken with palsy,
Now am I sick with the close ache of terror,
Now am I as one who, having tasted poison,
Cowers, waiting for the pang!

THE MIDDLE MILES

For the God spake not . . .

And the sense of my littleness is upon me:
And I am a worm in my own sight,
Trodden and helpless;
A casual grain of sand
Indistinguishable amid a million grains:
And I take no pleasure now in youth
Nor in youth's madness,
In love
Nor in love's unresting heart;
And I praise no longer the eyes of a wanton,
Nor the lips of a wanton,
Nor the light feet of a dancing girl.

ONLY NOT TO BE TOO EARLY OLD

Only not to be too early old;
Only not to feel too soon the day
Emptied of all desire, unyielding gray;
Only not to sink too weary and cold
For fireside mirth, for friendly talk, for free
Soul-kindling thought "about it and about";
Nay, I would rather end life in a rout,
Stricken low by folly, dropping with a laugh,
  Than creep thus tamely out
Trailing the tatters of my mystery
To the dull cadence of an epitaph.

WE OF THE BORDERLAND . . .

We who are hardly of the sons of men,
We of the borderland twixt star and star,
Who meet stray voices, dog wilful lightnings laughing
Athwart the well-ordered world of use and wont,
Who dance above your dreams and leap for magic
Beyond the reluctant outposts of the soul,—
We are not as your children . . . The reckless Sun
Yields of his plenitude to all, but pours
For us from his crimson chalice of unrest.
We are harried by the cold fervor of the sea,
Strung by the dawn to outcry, torn by gusts
From the desired Unknown. We may not veil
Our eyes, stop ears, or shroud our sentient flesh
From love's intrinsicate beauty.
Ye who buy
Cheap and sell dear, who weigh the average loss
Against the average profit; ye who walk
Your solid pavements with the certain tread
Of citizens that say "To-morrow I go
To Boston by the nine-fifteen express,
And the next morning I take the ten-fifteen,"
Troubled by no bleak vision of dark wings
Hovering, by no harrowing flash that all
Your wits have moulded into use and wont
Is streaming star-dust and flux of ruined suns;
Ye who are mortised to the earth—ye are wise!

Thus we, the graceless mountebanks of God,
Salute you, pipe for you when ye have dined, and smile

Two smiles—one lip-smile, one of secret mirth—
When ye are moved to praise our artistry.
Alms, alms, good burghers, alms! O rare is the jest!

That love-song pleased you? It is yours. That strain
Tickled your senses? It is yours. We live,
We die, to serve you—O assuredly
We live and die to serve you . . . and pass on.
Heard ye not then sly laughter from the moon—?

THE HEROES

Prometheus
Heaven yielded fire to my unconquered will!
I was the foe of Zeus . .
Brennus
Rome smoked when I
Leaped with my wolf-pack from the wilderness.
Caesar
Ay, but your Gaulish folk bowed to my legions,
As Rome to me . .
Alexander
Rome was not worth my sword.
Persia became my prowess well; the Nile
Ran red with native blood at my command;
The desert Sphynx lowered her eyes before me . .
Don Quixote
My levelled lances smote through giants' mail.

Bernard Shaw

My paradoxes have abased the mighty.

Apollo

Song lives upon men's lips because of me;
I wing my golden arrows yet from heaven;
I . .

A Confusion of Voices

I . . I . . I . . .

A Woman's Voice

My lover died,
Leaving me quick with child; I fainted not;
In agony I bore him, and with patience
Nursed, reared him, and my son neglected me
For one white-throated, one with weightier hair,
One with alert incomparable eyes:
I prayed for him—I fainted not—I died.

A Confusion of Voices

I . . I . . I . . .

A Laborer

Ye are great folk. My hands
Wrought with a trowel fifty years . .

Grave Digger

My hands
Wrought with a spade . .

Lucifer

Fool, fools!

Jesus

Nay, suffer them.

They speak as boastful children when their games
Are over, when the evening falls, and they
Clap baby hands and with shrill ecstasy
Magnify each his little triumph. God
Pays little heed to childish clamor . .

Lucifer

God
Pays little heed to aught save His Sole Self.

Jesus

Ah Lucifer!

Voices, *dispersedly*

I smote . . I dared . . I conquered . . .

Jesus

Yea, but my secret ones who clamor not,
Who lived out simple and enduring lives,
Lived simply and endured and suffered, these
Nestle within the eternal peace of heaven.

Lucifer

Stagnation broods with them; mine are the Heroes!

THE COMRADE

Call me friend or foe,
  Little I care!
I go with all who go
  Daring to dare.

THIS POEM

I am the force,
  I am the fire,
I am the secret source
  Of desire.

I am the urge,
  The spur and thong:
Moon of the tides that surge
  Into song!

Call me friend or foe,
  Little care I,
I go with all who go
  Singing to die.

Call me friend or foe. . .
  Taking to give,
I go with all who go
  Dying to live.

THIS POEM

If this poem should go
To one not known to me,
And whispering whisper low:
What troubles thee?

If this poem should pass
To one alone with pain,

And murmur, *See—the grass!*
Or, *List—the rain!*

If this poem should seek
One comfortless and seem
To press a tear-stained cheek
With lips of dream . . .

Ah then this poem were,
Albeit a homely thing,
My heart's true messenger
Worthily swift to bear
Love's signet-ring.

I KNOW A GARDEN . . .

I know a garden hung in air
Above the dim Salernian sea,
A garden excellently fair,
Remote, walled in mysteriously;

A garden in a lonely place,
Clinging about a ruined pile:
The curious wanderer still may trace
Column and court and peristyle.

The curious wanderer still may find,
Fretted with yellow roses there,
Quaint arabesques by Moors designed
To grace the garden hung in air.

And still a curious eye may peer
Between thick cypress-stems and see
Circled with passion-flowers the sheer
Rude strength of Norman masonry.

But ah, far lovelier in decay
Are these dead stones that prop the rose,
The ruined strength of yesterday
Clad round with beauty and repose!

Far lovelier since the strong men died
Who reared them up in strife and hate,
Revenge and rapine, these their pride
Which knew no yielding—save to fate.

For now a terrace fronts the sea,
Spread far below, and thence the eye
Can sweep the coast toward Sicily
And many a margent town descry:

White-roofed Minori, where the boats
Lie evenly along the strand,
Maiori, off whose whiteness floats
A white sail bound for lotos land.

But though it pierce the utmost blue
Where sea and sky meet to increase
The deep translucence of their hue,
'Twill but discern a deeper peace.

THE MIDDLE MILES

No pirate galley mars the bliss,
No burning village smokes, no gleam
Of reckless steel discolors this
Unblemished tapestry of dream.

Life is at rest here. Nature weaves
A spell of honied silence round,
With incantations of still leaves
And soft enchantments sweetly bound

To Norman tower and Moorish court
By odorous garlands of the rose . . .
Here comes no passion, fierce and short . . .
Here only comes at evening's close

A tinkle of far bells, a song
From some far hill-side faintly heard
(*Man passes, nature's life is long,*
It sighs), the twitter of a bird,

The rustle of a lizard's feet—
Along that roseate wall he ran
Whisking, inimitably fleet,
Amid the dry valerian.

Only these trivial whispering things,
Deepening the peace, till wish and will
Die out with the last whisperings,
And life seems death, it is so still.

ITALIA

The poet's heart-felt home is Italy;
Her gifts are poet-gifts for dreaming men . . .
Whether on Paestum's plain she languidly
Accept his prayers to the old Gods again;
Or whether on Ravello's height she take
His head upon her bosom, lest he wake
To the unloveliness of life and pen
The tiniest song of disillusionment;
Or whether at her amplest she content
His sensitive spirit with an Umbrian smile
(Wide, wide and warm along the ripening wheat
  Soft-flecked with the olive's quivering shade, and sweet,
  Sweet as the smile Luini's women wear!),
Or if she bind about him her dark hair—
Camaldulensian forests, aisle on aisle
Like strand on strand,—always she does invent
New music for his being's rhythmic need:
Ever new harmonies, which yet outpour
(As fire-bright poppies out-leap from hidden seed)
In quenchless fountains from her antique breast . . .
Ah, hers it is to minister indeed
The undying beauty born of earth's dark core,
Not elsewhere so divinely manifest.

TO A CERTAIN NOBLE GENTLEMAN

(With a Salutation to J. Henri Fabre)*

Not you, sir, in whose family the blood
Of noble folk has pulsed three hundred years,
It is not you who bind one leaf the more
To the green wreath of deeply laurelled France:
No, but an old man worn with bitter toil,
Worn but not broken; one whose ancestry
Is dark with darkness of a night unstarred;
Whose peasant forebears read nor book nor man
Nor the strange palimpsest of nature; one
Marked by the usage of the world for slave
Unto a meagre life of weary days—
Not you, sir, but this son of peasant sons
Has drawn the far world's homage, and unto France
(Proud mother of proud sons) adds faultless fame.

Brave Henri Fabre, brave mind and braver heart!
Humbly we bend the knee to you, for God
Hid in your dust the authentic spark . . His fire
Shines with compelling flame from gold or clay—
Yet clay to Him seems dearer, and the lamps
Of Heaven are simple vessels, but o'erbrimmed
With unconsuming oil. How patiently
(As with a quiet smile) does God reward
Man's courtly and presumptuous embassies
By sending home a little kneaded earth,

PAMPARIGOUSTO

Red earth and rudely fashioned, but therein
A secret star, a smouldering sun, a light
Beyond the dream of princes! And we sing
The shimmering songs of plowboys . . . and are wise
A little now because in Sérignan
There is an eye to read, a heart to feel,
A voice to speak things locked in Nature's breast—
Sealed from the great how many centuries!

* Died Oct., 1915, two years after these lines were written.

PAMPARIGOUSTO

I

Somewhere among the pale Provençal hills
An indistinguishable path departs
Toward a far city whose more glamorous marts
Offer no various merchandise of ills.
Naught is for sale there, yet the hungry fills
His skin with fattest capon and golden wine
Which some thrice-honeyed vineyard there distils;
  And they with frosty hearts
Find love to warm them—earthly or divine;
  And they who serve the arts
Find there more poignant chords, a purer line,
Palettes with colors mixed of fire and dew;
  And there the old renew
Youth, but without youth's restlessness, and the young
Gain calm there; the blind—eyes; the dumb—a tongue.

II

Now would to God this path to men were known!
Known to sad men perplexed by life's lost joys;
Known to sad women stunned by perplexing cares;
Known to unflowering girls, to stunted boys;
  Would God this path were theirs
To follow, follow away beyond the Rhone,
Yea, far beyond Tarascon, and Beaucaire—
Famed of her motley Fair,
  Within whose booths no talisman's for sale
    Can such as these avail,—
Beyond Avignon's desolated throne,
Far on, far on, whither it winds alone
(Unmarked, save by some more fantastic branch
Of knotted olive, or some white casual stone)—
Far on, far on, whither this blind path leads,
  Deft, wary, sinuous, shy,
Athwart Les Baux where the worn Alpilles blanch
  Under their silver sky;
Thence on, far off beyond all crafts and creeds,
  Beyond death's latest cry,
Unto that City where none need ever die,
  Nor lack the thing he needs.

III

Vain is my heart-felt wish; vain were the quest
After this enigmatic trail to bliss!
Yet surely somewhere near St. Rémy is

LOURDES

The starting foot-way toward this fairest, best,
Most admirable City, famed and sung
By sun-burnt poets in their sun-warmed tongue;
Nor dare I hope to praise with equal zest
Pamparigousto—high fantastical,
Where naught is stale, nor any sweets can pall—
(Pray heaven some day we find it after all!)
Pamparigousto—City of the Blest.

LOURDES

Lourdes! . . . from our moving window we
Peered forth and saw the arduous hill
Crowned with a mimic Calvary;
Lower the double Church, and still
Lower the pilgrim throng who fill
Thy ways, O Lourdes, with pain and prayer . . .
Lady of Lourdes, was it thy will
To crucify a vale so fair?

Lady of Lourdes, was it thy will
To crucify so fair a place?
Expect not then my prayers! Thy chill,
Thy shallow grotto holds no grace
For me, nor is thy cloying face
Sweet as September's latest smile:—
Be thine, O Amber-souled, my praise!
Thee would I worship here awhile.

It may not be. No lyric hymn
Stirs for the Amber-souled. My heart
Droops, sickens, dies; the world shows grim;
September's sunlight has no art
To mask with colored veils this mart
Where miracles are bought with pain . . .
I feel my eyelids swim and smart;
Beauty has kissed them—but in vain.

O spot of unexampled wrath
Where beauty meets with beauty's foe
And falls down prostrate . . . Prostrate? Hath
Yon mountain failed in splendor?—No.
Hath the unpitying Gave de Pau
Failed in swift brightness? Ah, but I
Fail of their pagan scorn, nor know
Whether in life we live or die.

September's soul of temperate flame
Quiets to loveliness; the breeze
Yet murmurs the inconstant name
Of summer to the mulberry trees;
The fragrant noon is laced with bees
Heavy with sweetness . . . Yea, but near
Anguish is bending strong men's knees,
And Nature hears not . . . Does God hear?

LES ANDELYS

The unreluctant Seine moves blithely on,
Blithely yet with a large serenity,
And slipping fast by Tosny's sleeping spire
Rounds to the sweetest town of sweetest name
Its waters lave—Les Andelys—and there
Draws down the Saucy Castle deep within
A faultless mirror, echoing the green
Abundance of fat meadows, echoing
The wide-drawn circle of these dream-white cliffs—
Dream-white fantastic bastions whereon the towers
Of Richard's castle rise fantastically.
And yet a little farther, past the bridge,
The clearly moving waters clearly paint
A line of tiniest houses and a spire
Of slenderest grace, but paint them up-side-down,
Each under each, and so with swifter course
And ruffling surface sweep among green isles
(Such poplared islands as Corot has seen
Through misty mornings wearing silver veils) . . .
Thence proudly onward till a deep curve hides
The splendid river, but hides not the hills.
And we who love this ample country know
How fairly onward in wide curves the Seine
Caresses many a margent town, but none
Lovelier in itself nor lovelier
In the caressing cadence of a name
Than these twain villages which yet are one . . .
Big Andely and Little Andely—
Les Andelys . . .

"CLAIR DE LUNE"

(*After Verlaine*)

Your spirit is a dainty place
Where delicate maskers come and go,
Playing on lutes and dancing, with a trace
Of sadness under their fantastic show.

There, ever singing in a minor strain
Fortunate life and love's triumphant sway,
Joyous, they seem to hold all joyance vain . . .
And with the lucid moonlight blends their lay.

The lucid moonlight beautiful and tender
That makes the sleepy birds dream in the trees,
And the tall fountain-columns, maiden-slender
Amid their marbles, sob with alien ecstasies.

AFTER HEARING MUSIC BY CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Pallor of the dead roses of eventide,
Evanescent silver of frosty petals
Where the late loveliest moon-flowers quaver and die . . .
Breath of the last faint elfin horn of the night,
Eerie and low o'er the fern-arch'd runnel . . and now

The mild, the rhythmical dropping of happy tears . . .
O ghostly incantations, sibilant dreams,
Tenuous, exquisite lullabies of the soul . . .
But ah, the waking! the harsh return, the unrest,
The deep nostalgia for the impermanent spell!

Wizard, evoker of vanishing moods—is it well?

LAMENT OF A NEW ENGLAND ART STUDENT

(*Adagio, ma non troppo . . .*)

In the Luxembourg Gardens below the Queens of France
Brown-legged urchins scamper with hair and eyes adance;
And down the shadier alleys beneath the browning trees
Frail lovers of the Quarter stroll delectably at ease
In Zion; and I mark them with a wistful envious smile,
And I would that I were twenty in the happy Pagan style
Of being French and twenty, and I would that I could taste
The naïve joy of Gaston when his arm is around her waist.
But woe is me, my forebears chose to agonize and pray

To a God who lived on vengeance in a most appalling way,
Who kept a strong fire burning for souls that couldn't kill
The joy of life within them:—and I am suffering still
Because in lonely Salem-town they agonized and prayed
To be delivered from the wiles of Satan and a maid.
So I sit alone and watch them with a wistful wondering sigh,
Frail lovers of the Quarter who are happier than I;
And I would that I were twenty in the unassuming style
Of being French and twenty, and I half-contrive a smile
Of superior disenchantment . . . but my timid pulses dance
Like the brown-legged urchins singing there below the the Queens of France,
In the Luxembourg Gardens — below the Queens of France.

STROLLER'S SONG

Open your heart to me; I will not wait
Forever at the gate.
I do not tarry at unwelcoming doors.
Open your heart, and I will sing,
Within its hushed and somber-pallid walls,

POOR PIERROT . . .

Where never a lusty, dusty footstep falls,
Such buxom caroling,
So richly phrased, so buoyantly elate,
As the vibrant veery pours
Unto its mate.
Let me but leap within on ringing heel,
Throw wide love's casement to the unshuttered
day,
And bear your nun-like soul away,
Till it has learned not how to pray,
But how to feel!

POOR PIERROT . . .

I

Let me escape confusion; let me find
Some clue, though false, to lead me through the world!
I would not wander blind,
Giddy, extravagantly buffeted,
Fantastically whirled
By the slant atom-rain of life's desires.
Man's soul was not designed
To play the mountebank—heels over head,
To dance along slack wires
Of conscience, but to tread
Firmly along well-ordered paths. The mind
Is not God's zany! . . Often have I said

Mad words, mad deeds have often done
(O motley fool!)—
Have often capered to the unsparing sun
(O motley fool!)—
But now at last—at last—my clowning's done:
I mean to live by rule.

II

Yet—yet—yet—yet . . .
O youth, O golden heart,
O light-foot and illustrious waywardness!
Let me not too soon forget
(*Columbine—Mignonette—*)
All the memories that start
Forth from thy deserted shrine,
Youth of mine!
'Tis time to leave them, I confess:
But O the old-time waywardness,
Light-foot illustrious waywardness . . .
(*Ah Mignonette, alas!—woe's me—ah Columbine!*)

MY CITY WINDOW FRONTS THE SKY . . .

My city window fronts the sky
Across tin roofs and chimney squares;
Its blueness does not satisfy,
It does not lure me unawares

MY CITY WINDOW FRONTS THE SKY . . .

To lose in dream the sharp unrest
That haunts the mind where millions strive
Angrily for the unpossessed—
Power, wealth! It does not keep alive

The soul's contentment. How should sky
(Space merely, color merely) give
More to the heart than to the eye?
Blue is but blue. We cannot live

On the imponderably fair;
We cannot use the stars, nor make
The moon spin luxuries, the air
Exalt us when its banners shake.

And yet I half-remember days
When the sky's magic solaced me,
When wandering shy, unthrifty ways
I felt expand immeasurably

My faith in man as something more
Than earth reveals him, felt indeed
Man's spirit vaster than his lore,
His peddling ethics, peddler creed.

Half-memories serve not . . . Here, who sees
More in the sky than tinted space,
Here, who would cloud with mysteries
The on-rush of the market-place?

Poor sentimentalist, behold
Life passes—live, then, ere you die!
Is there not power and fame and gold—?
My city window fronts the sky.

THE ESCAPE

Out from the whirl of factional unrest,
Out from the city clamor and spent steam
Of speculative scheme and counter-scheme,
Out from the curdling spume, the very crest
Of time's froth-feathered wave, I spring—and seem
At once in a far land my heart loves best:
A land of sheltered valleys, a green nest
For the wise leisure of luxurious dream.

There, a familiar native, I frequent
The shade of ancient ilexes, or pass
A rippling shadow over rippling grass,
Or leap unharmed down some sheer, swift descent,
A light-foot Mercury; or else I lie
Like a still lake hoarding the azure sky.

THE CHANGE

A year ago I sang with ecstasy
Love's song for youth, set to a plaintive tune;
Then melancholy rhymes were all to me . . .
But now I am impatient with the moon!

THE CHANGE

For now life's garden solaces, the dream,
The glamour, the enchanted way of fears,
Are barren to my soul; and verses seem
Crystal too frail for the strong wine of tears.

I am confronted now with fiends that tear
All sensuous veils of beauty from life's face;
And I have looked on souls made gaunt and bare,
Naked and shame-worn in a shameful place.

No more, no more of lilies, O no more
Of sumptuous lilies by a midnight pool!
I have dislimned these visions seen before
Joy's deep betrayal put my heart to school.

Now if I speak my soul out, I must speak
Words of right pity, words of strength, and say
Truth's tonic incantation for the weak,
Nor waste my wits on sonnet or virelay!

Strange! for a year ago with ecstasy
I set youth's longing to a Circean tune;
Then the white arms of beauty beckoned me . . .
But now I am impatient with the moon.

APOLOGIA

I

Here on this little hill
  The world seems still,
Mild as a sleeping child;

Though dull'd and far away
  A pigmy dray
Jars, and toy trolley cars

Pipe at a distant curve,
  But only serve
Thus to make fabulous

The tale of trafficking men
  Unsated when
They have out-toil'd the day.

II

Here is no task, no toil;
  Like amber oil
Drips sunlight from the tips

Of apple leaves, and here
  The wastrel year
Waits at rich Autumn's gates.

APOLOGIA

I too have waited long
  Largesse of song,
Mute as an unlipp'd flute,

But now am moved to sing
  This alien thing,
This rude antithesis

Of my calm hour, to praise
  All men whose days
Seem empty of mere dream.

III

Like clacking shells my rhyme
  Beats tuneless time
Set by earth's castanet—

Labor—whose rhythm, alack!
  Of cog and track
Draws by compulsive laws

Man's feet from quiet grass
  To where men pass
Life in reluctant strife.

IV

Yet is strife well; for we
  Whose mystery—
Art—is the counterpart

Of the all-dreaming Mind,
  Do we not find
Less of strong happiness

Than they who rise to meet
  In shop and street
Work it were death to shirk?

Is he not wiser thus
  Who simply does
One duty, which undone

Leaves the world incomplete,
  Than I who meet
Shades in the soul's arcades

And name them by sweet names?
  The known task shames
Me for my treachery

Unto man's long affray,
  His day by day
Fight for his primal right—

APOLOGIA

The right to live and win
  Comfort for kin,
Bread—ere Fate strikes him dead.

Are we not drones who take
  Honey *they* make
Who, without dreaming, do?—

We who, untrammel'd, sing
  Resurgent Spring;
Rhyme opulent Summer's prime;

Paint brooding Autumn's tints,
  Whose breath imprints
Red where slain youth has bled;

Carve from cold stone the grace
  Our fond eyes trace
Where beauty's breast lies bare

Unto our gaze; or weave
  Deep chords that leave
Pain ere they sound again . . .

v

Surely then work is well:
  But who shall tell
Why, when man comes to die,

The merchandise he wrought
  With tool or thought
Fades, and lost dream invades

His tugging soul—that ark
  Whose voyage dark
Ends whither God intends.

Staunch ark for what wide sea!
  Thy freight shall be
Less than thy roominess

If thou hast lightered all
  Corporeal,
And heaped along the strand

Dead cargoes without worth
  Beyond the earth—
Cold sophistries of gold.

VI

So may it be the heart
  Hath need of art;
Yea, when the patient day

Hath ground the grist to flour,
  Mayhap the hour
Comes when the whirring drums

Are voiceless, and the soul
  Slips the control
Of flesh, to turn with love

Unto a region far
  From needs that bar
Him from the Seraphim.

This be our hope who live
  Dreaming to give
Gleams from our wasteful dreams.

This be our hope, for this
  Our sole plea is
When we are judged of men.

VII

The spent day's embers sift
  To ash. Stars lift . . .
I shall but feel the sky,

Sense the cool grass, and lean
  Like night serene
Till I have drunk my fill

Of peace—nor rise perturb'd
  While dream, uncurb'd,
Grows like a silent rose.

MIDWINTER ODE

Red earth, a rigid lake, sharp-silver'd trees;
And furtive, thinned by cock-crow, vanishing
How stealthily (ah, vanished now!) the wraith
Of January's moon . . .
Peace; none too soon
Hast fled, thou frost-belated breath
Sighed forth by sheeted midnight! Nay, poor ghost,
Thou wast betrayed almost
Into the saffron revelries of dawn . . .
Well for thee thou hast gone
Ere gold-bright tresses, forward blown by the breeze
That may not lead one ripple o'er the lake,
Lift from the east to fling
The challenged world awake.

What meant the churlish King
Who likened winter to his crooked mind?
Now is the winter of my full content,
The winter of my solace and desire . . .
What though the sun doth hoard his deeper fire,
He doth not hoard his beauty, but casteth down
O'er the restricted earth a pure pale crown
More precious for rare platinum mixed with gold.
The bare brows of the hills are aureoled;
No bird-chime rings reveille—but I bless
The thoughtful day's auguster silentness.

THE OWL ON WING OF SILENTNESS . . .

The wan ice suddenly
Blooms with etherial loveliness,
And the calm heaven expands,
While from the trancèd lake a mystic rose
Flowers, meet for plucking of no mortal hands:
Yet swiftly plucked no less,
Plucked swiftly and tossed afar
Beyond the lattice of a waiting star.
—Ah, who would be
One season's lackey, when the lucent year
Turns like a crystal sphere
Fulfilled of infinite dream! The heart that knows
But summer, knows not summer—nor the vast
Sweep of the Sower's cast . . .
Unwearying, impartially He sows
His radiant seed that grows
(Lo, the morn witnesseth—!)
Even from the chill sterilities of death.

THE OWL ON WING OF SILENTNESS . . .

The owl on wing of silentness
Drifts through the dusk to strike and kill:
O Nature, fair and pitiless,
Is it thy will?

Why then dost thou, cold Temptress, let
The beauty of the morning free

Faint fragrance from the violet,
And turn each tree

Into a jubilant shout of song—
As if thy laws were love and joy?
Thou canst not hide from us thy wrong,
Nor yet destroy

Our sense of thy long cruelty.
Because thou smil'st we will not smile,
Nor sanction thy hypocrisy,
Mother of guile!

Pluck out the terrors from thy breast,
Be gentle not in show but deed,
And we will own thy children blest:—
But now they bleed.

They bleed—and thou art perfecting
Some oriole's bright bridal dress . . .
Shame! Maker of the owl's sly wing
Of silentness!

SING FORTH, SING FREE

Dark in the hemlock sings a hidden bird,
And if his song has meaning, it is sad,
A little piping plaint . . .
Ah me, ah me, ah me!

And if it has no meaning, it is sad;
Because vain tears are stirred
By reason of its thin monotony . . .
Ah me, ah me!

O merciless bird throw off this weary, faint,
Unpassionate restraint!
Sing forth, sing free!
Win to some masterful utterance, even of grief!
You tease my heart into a restless woe:
Sing forth, sing free!
Ah no . . .
The little querulous plaint slips like a thief
Into my heart and filches one by one
My hoarded joys, hoarded for dark to-morrows;
Yet will not take from me the least of many sorrows.

Cease then to sing!

Cease, poet, if thy song
Be but a wailing and a weary thing,
Sighed to a rifted lute.
The unfaltering world has struggled overlong
To be thus harried and relaxed by thee.
Either sing forth, sing free
(As even the sad soul sings when it is strong)—
Or else be mute.

TO A FAIR MORALIST

You call me Faun . . . Am I indeed so free
Of old Earth's unregenerate pagan heart?
Into my eyes do no tears ever start?
Am I untouched by sorrow's mystery?
Throbs life so frankly in the veins of me
That just to caper, just to fling the heel,
Expressing the sharp joy my senses feel,
Is all my law and my morality?

You call me Faun . . . Is it because I follow
That fleeing Nymph, the Present, with desire
To feel upon my breast her bosom's fire
And make her deeply mine? Or is it only
That I repudiate the Past as lonely,
And call the unrequiting Future hollow?

WHEN HALF-GODS GO . . .

Fluttering amid flushed apple-bloom
A starling dances on the bough;
I watch him from my quiet room
Caper with clown-like mop and mow.

His eerie whistle tricks the ear;
Half zany, half ventriloquist,
He mocks the sweetness of the year—
A cynical, sly amorist.

QUESTION OF PROPERTY

Spite of myself, I smile; and still
Love him not. While this jaunty thing
Prances, and snaps his witty bill—
I shall not hear my blue-bird sing.

QUESTION OF PROPERTY

Blue-bird, balancing on my little pear-tree,
You know not of trespass;
Know not the earth at the tree's root
Is mine,
And for rods about it—
Mine.
No one may come upon it
If I gainsay them;
No one may taste the fruit of my tree
Without my grudging permit . . .
Not even a happy child.

Sing for me, blue-bird!
Sing!
Your weak contralto warble quiets and comforts me.
Sing! 'Tis I command you!
I—who own the pear-tree,
And the green earth about it,
And the fat red worms below the sod.
You are my pensioner—sing then, or leave me!

Nay—? But you will not?

THE WISH

If once before I die
It might be given me
To leap beyond the lie
Of word-born poetry,

To leap beyond and sing
The song no words can tame . . .
One deeply-troubled string,
One heart-beat! That were fame.

"FRAIL SINGERS OF TO-DAY"

Frail singers of to-day, your song is sweet;
  The words that ye repeat
Are comely, making music as they pass
  Faint as the singing glass
Rubbed by a moistened finger; round and round
  Circles the rim of sound,
A thin yet poignant cry. But yesterday
  Men sang a manlier way,
Plucking rough chords of strength from lyres too rude
  Ever to be subdued
By this slight tinkling harmony of the hour.
  Awake, awake to power,

BUT—SOUL?

Singers of songs—else die! Far better mute
  Were the emasculate lute,
Far better silent, than thus chirping on
  An echo of things gone—
Gone down forever with all those mighty hearts
  Who brook no counterparts.

BUT—SOUL?

Delicate little rhythmic flutterings,
Golden wing-work in diaphanous azure,
Pearl-like words, one after one—but force,
But fire of intellect, but soul?
                Ah Poet,
Turn from these flawless arabesques, turn, turn
From exquisite and futile patterning!
Many can say that violets are sweet . . .

RIVALS

For one the arid peaks, the stars,
  Remote, austere:
    His song will live.
For one the golden meadows of the mind,
Where he can bind
  Frail verses in a sheaf for Beauty—near,
    But fugitive!

WOE TO THE POET WHO FORGETS TO DREAM

Woe to the poet who forgets to dream
His living dream of beauty! He shall be
As severed seaweed on a stagnant sea,
Dead in the midst of vastness, endlessly
Buoyed in lank inaction . . .
Let no gleam,
Poet, escape thee from the tiniest star,
Lest, losing thus thine eye's quick prescience, thou
Become as one defrauded and alone.
Oh, have a care lest the wind's overtone
Sing by unheeded and thy slothful ear
Shut out forever the one ineffable bar
Of vanishing music thou wast born to hear.
Poet, thy song is now!
To-morrow's song, to-morrow's song falls cold
From stiffening lips and touches not the heart.
Forget the world, poet, its praise, its gold,
Yea, even forget for one brief hour thine art:
Be ignorantly bold!
Seize on the dream vouchsafed thee, nor allow
Its shy-foot presence songless to depart.

SONS OF MEN

We seek we know not what of bliss:
Kissing but lips we strive to kiss
The soul; we are not satisfied
If the unimaged be denied.
Something impalpable we crave. . . .
The rainbow in the breaking wave.
And when we long for death, even then
Beyond death's quietude we quest,
And discontented with the grave
Refuse the deep reward of rest—
Longing to live and long again.

TO A CHRISTIAN POET.

I have been as one dead.
I have forgotten how the sun-rays dart;
I have ignored the glamour of the stars;
Cold, cold has been my heart.
Have I not often in derision said,
"Life is a little thing of little worth"—
The while beneath my feet a burgeoning earth
Healed with young herbage all her ancient scars?
Yea, I have sung this thing and deemed it true,
That life is a brief cruelty and death
An endless respite.

You
Have sung of Nazareth.

You have sung sweetly of the Light, the mild
Insistent Light that penetrates the dust,
And says unto the soul of man, 'My child,
Renew your child-like trust.'
And from your eyes have I not felt a Light,
A Light of mild, insistent power,
Defeat with gentleness my scornful vision?
Have I not learned the darkness of derision,
And from the calm grace of your spirit's might
Drawn strength and healing in my bitterest hour?

Your miracles, your ritual, your laws
Are to my unfaith as a dream-like play:
But radiant from your heart is that which draws
My spirit out of shadow to the day;
Draws with the silent tension of star on star
Till I am forced above
This wreck of system-faiths and borne afar
By flawless wafture of the wings of Love.

Most true that you have won me to rely
On the o'ermastering soul, and to despise
All acrid cynic thoughts made hideous by
The grandeur of your deep rewarding eyes.

TO FRANCIS THOMPSON.. WHITHER?

Surely in Heaven, master.. yet thy Heaven
Is fabulous to me,
Nor may I supplicate on trustful knee

TO FRANCIS THOMPSON. . . WHITHER?

Thy Lady Mary in whose heart are seven
  Sharp swords from Calvary.

The Hound of Love who hunted thee to heal thee
  Tracks not my doubtful ways;
I wander blindly a star-woven maze,
Nor may I part the blue veils that conceal thee
  From my unfaithful gaze.

And yet I trust thy vision, feel thy prescience,
  And know that thou art where
All spirits dwell who raptly dream and dare
To give the radiant lie to man's crude nescience.
  —Shelley is with thee there.

The Land of Luthany perchance its name is,
  "Set i' the pathless awe";
I know not.. But I know thy soul must draw
On to that star whose pure unlitten flame is
  The sum and source of Law.

Master, what matters it? A nameless wonder
  Enfolds us from our birth.
Weak wistful children of the atom Earth,
What matters it if more or less we blunder?
  Does it not move to mirth

When from an infant's puzzling lips we hearken
  Wise prattle of the moon?

We smile at cat and fiddle, dish and spoon;
Then turn to utter solemn words that darken
  Life's undeciphered Rune.

But forth from troubled hearts and passionate guesses,
  Forth from man's hearth-like breast
Leaps up a lyric flame toward the Unguess'd,
A tiny lifting flame that warms and blesses
  And points us to our rest.

Thy flame yet warms and lightens and shall lighten,
  For thou hast shared thy fire;
Thou addest fervor to the soul's desire,
And round thy luminous song new singers brighten,
  Glow, coruscate — aspire!

Thy fellowship with pain, thy self-abasement,
  Dread of love's perilous height,
All that was blind about thee and of night
Now troubles thee no more. Beyond life's casement
  Thou findest room for flight.

Falcon of God, the azure of thy pinions
  O'erclimbs my thought. Their hue
Lives in thy fledgling songs' inseparate blue,
Dawn-feather'd from empyreal dominions
  Ere thou wast charm'd thereto.

Charm'd hence, but ah, not wholly! Thou canst never
  Steal from our hearts thy truth;

IN IRELAND

The world seems younger since thou sang'st of youth;
Nor from fit ears shall any voice dissever
  Thy mystic joy and ruth.

"The angels keep their ancient places".. Master,
  Thou hast not failed to be
One at the timeless tryst, nor timelessly
To sing that Song which, for our joy's disaster,
  Earth could not win from thee.

IN IRELAND.

(*to* C. A. B.)

"In Ireland, holy Ireland"—said the stranger man to me—
"There's menace when the sky's blue, and malice o'er the sea;
"For beauty there's a fey thing, a shy thing , a fleet;
"And her love-kiss comes at parting, swift and cruel sweet."

"Her kiss it comes at parting"— said the strange man and wild—
"And she goes her ways of wonder like a little lost child;
"She goes her ways, her lost ways of wonder, but she leaves
"On the lips of the lonely a gay song that grieves."

"O STRANGE MONOTONY OF SONG"

O strange monotony of song!
Life's joy,
Life's pain,
The ecstasy, the agony of love,
The sharp despair, the solaces of death;
The irretrievable loss that desolates;
The daring hope that somewhere beyond change
Our lost ones wait for us with happier eyes!
Strange, strange majestic sameness.. Yesterday,
To-day, To-morrow — still the ancient cries,
The ancient voices, the
Antique imperishable facts of song:
Life, Love, and Death.

PER CONTRA

Give us new songs, ye cry, give us new songs!
We weary of an ancient music grown thin and cold!
We weary of this faint shadow of former mastery.
New songs!
Songs for the restless new-born souls of men!
Urgent songs for the urgent purposeful hour!
O no more of discredited dead yesterdays;
No more of that pale witchery named Greece;
No more of bronze majestic Rome!
No more of earth's lurid mystical interlude,

PER CONTRA

Those mid-world centuries muttering wild dreams,
Cursing life, the forsworn,
Cursing the beautiful lithe bodies of men,
The blond elegance of women,
Lost in formless famishing ecstasies. . .
No more of these, we weary of these, ye cry.
New songs!
Sing us force and joy:
Free force about us, within us,
Joy passionate and concrete;
Not of sense only — joy of action, joy of mind —
Such joy we crave!
Sing us to-day's song and to-morrow's song,
Set to vital tunes, rich with deep unsuspected
harmonies:
Flute us no longer on archaic reedy flutes
Scant plaintive measures. . .
No, rather strike out crashing seven-hued chords,
Muscled chords of more powerful, more insistent life!
New songs!

Thus, thus ye cry on us who sing —
Who sing remembered memorable days,
Unforgettable loves tenderly nursed by time,
Mad exquisite deeds worthy a thousand voices,
Sombre and delicate visions, permanent in perpetual
evanescence —
Thus, thus ye cry on us! And we,

Late-born lovers of golden melodies,
Suave flowing measures and blithe recurrent rhymes,
We sigh, we strain our voices, we shout in vain.
The detonating seven-hued chords ye seek,
Our talents find not.
Yet we rack, jangle at our souls
To please a jaded world:
A world that harbors us indeed,
But garners not our true gifts, and rejects
(Rightly rejects!)
The novel false brute-chested cacophonous noises
We perpetrate—striving to phrase To-day.

INCANTATION

Give me magic, give me sorcery, give me song!
Give me the words that are no words, but a dream
Of a shadow-island astir with a silvery throng,
A white-rose wraith-like throng of beings who seem
Clearer, rarer than moonlight on frost-pale lilies,
Beings of gossamer-tenuous beauty who fade
Into the quivering pulses of night where the thrill is
Faint with the delicate joy of their brief masquerade.

Give me magic, give me sorcery, give me song!
Give me the words that are no words, but a dream
Of a fire-bright island aflame with a radiant throng,
A red-rose wreath-like throng of beings who seem

IN LIEU OF PREFACE

Stronger, purer than sunlight on tigerish lilies,
Beings of resonant beauty who beacon nor fade
Under the brazen splendor of noon where the thrill is
Trumpet-ardent for joy of their bold masquerade...

Give me magic, give me sorcery, give me song...
Give me the words that are no words, but a dream!

IN LIEU OF PREFACE

From twenty-one to twenty-seven
I dreamed of sudden fame;
Each night I saw the vault of heaven
Illumined by my name.

But no one else could see the letters
In flame along the sky,
And now I've lived to know my betters
I do not gaze so high.

Not very far from earth I look now,
Nor always look in vain;
The leaves that form this little book now
Were gathered in the plain.

Others have climbed the peaks of morning,
Or soared beyond the stars:
My feet are in the vale. Take warning...
No Thoroughfare for Mars!

NIGHTMARE

Through the dark town I fumble;
No light, no star;
Blind mist, but no friendly gurgle of rain,
No drip
From the low-hung eaves for fellowship;
And the cobbled street
Harries my dragging feet
Till they stumble — stumble...

Blank, menacing town, where are
The hearts that make you not a tomb?
Surely in some close-shuttered room
Sleep fears to cope with pain?
I dare not hope for laughter —
But a cry?
One moan out of the night ere I pass by?
Silence would seem less sinister thereafter.

Where are your home-folk — where?
Is there no lurking mongrel to growl and scare
My numbing senses to life again?
Dim, menacing town — are you a town of men?
Does the sun rise here ever on market-day?
Are papers cried abroad?
Are children born here? and do they quarrel and play?
....Or is this death, O God?

MAITRE AROUET'S COMPLAINT

That son of mine, François. . my Fool in Verse
I call him.. I've an elder Fool, in Prose..
Was ever, I ask you, parent cursed with such
A diverse pair?.. Armand at the least I know,
Heels to head; lemon-visaged and—correct.
I count on him; he's safe — and tedious.. Bah!
But François — there's a limb! He bleeds quicksilver
From any casual scratch. The boy's possessed
By seven unresting devils that drive him on
To his destruction.. Why, from his very birth
He wrung my heart, and tricked me in the end.
The midwife gave him a scant hour to live,
But — François never does what one expects!
He turned from blue to rosy when the priest
Put holy water on his brow to wing
His infant soul toward Heaven, and then—he lived.
The rogue! I think 'twas Chateauneuf first named him
'Le petit volontaire'.. That was his true
Baptism. Bon Dieu! Was he not ugly? Skin
And bones.. poor Zozo! But his eyes! I never
In any child of man have seen such eyes!
Sometimes I wondered if an old Norway rat
Had crept beneath his baby-bonnet. . . To-day
When most I long to vent my rage upon him,
That impish look of his disquiets me;
And when he smiles, I, his own father, feel
A kind of inward sinking.. Ah, the rascal!
How well he understands I am half afraid

To scold him, lest he mock me.. Eyes, and smile,
And rapier tongue swift darting — pink! *Touché!*

But I'll not leave the dog a penny — not one!
Let him make verses and starve and hang in the end!
What! does he think I have slaved that he may dance?
Dance at a rope's tail, monkey!.. Literature!
Is that an honest man's profession? Am I
An ass?.. 'Twas Chateauneuf first turned his head,
Stuffing it full of godless rhymes; and now —
"Oedipe!"... Well, well, the verses tinkle neatly;
I'll not deny the lad has eloquence:
But let him use it then to shrewder purpose,
Plead in the Courts of France for noble clients,
Or serve his King abroad! Diplomacy!
Bon Dieu! Had I his wit I might have risen —
Who knows to what giddy height? But he lacks
prudence;
He needs must aim his arrows at the great,
Even at the Throne! Has he not served a year
In the Bastille for one malign *bon-mot?*
And when pardoned by Regent Philip himself, and
promised
Advancement—*saprement!*—he needs must say
"I thank your Highness for my board, but beg you
"To take no further thought, Sire, for my lodging!"
Does he hope thus to prosper?.. Yet when I offered
To buy him a good post, he answered me:

"Good places are not purchased; I'll soon win
"A better place more cheaply". . . The Bastille
That was the place he won — ha! When I heard
They had laid him by the heels, bon Dieu—I laughed!
The neighbors heard me laughing. Poor Armand
Thought I had lost my senses. How I roared!
—But, for all that, he shall not touch one sou
Of mine! Armand respects me. François. . . Well,
Judge for yourself...
I sent him to the Hague
(Not yet turned twenty) as page, or *attaché,*
To the Marquis de Chateauneuf, a brother
Of that Abbé who stuffed my François' noddle
With ribald verses. Marquis de Chateauneuf
Rode thither as Ambassador.. Bon Dieu!
I thought well I had launched my scrapegrace on
A prosperous tide toward Fortune!... Toward the gallows!
Scarce had he glanced about him when he fell
In love — with whom, I ask you? With a chit
Whose mother is a scurrilous pamphleteer;
A Protestant to boot! They met by stealth,
François and his "Pimpette"—all Holland soon
Embroiled in the intrigue! They locked him fast,
And he jumped out of windows, slid down roofs,
To meet the limber jade. She came to him
Dressed as a boy — *his* plot, of course! And then
He must scheme to bear his delicate boy away

To Paris — and cloak the scandal, saying he
Desired to win her back to the true Faith!
The profligate! Little he cared which Faith
Were false or true, who had none! But in the end
Marquis de Chateauneuf dispatched him home —
Where I slammed the door in his face! Little
cared he....
For that gay tongue of his won friends at will,
But to his cost willed oftenest to win
Him enemies. . no prudence — that's his fault.
A *mot* is more to him than daily bread;
Rather than lose his jest he forfeits freedom —
And in the end 'twill be his neck he forfeits.

Peste! I have done with him. . *"Oedipe"*, you say?
Yes, but the Regent liked it not; there were
Some lines slipped in to mock him. True; he smiled.
True; he has given François a medal of gold.
But that's his craft.. he waits. One more affront
Will bring Voltaire (he calls himself Voltaire
To madden me — "le petit volontaire"!)
A *lettre de cachet*.. 'Twill be but justice,
And the poor last of him. . .
Who knocks?
—Ah bah!
I had almost hoped.. Nay, 'tis my Fool in Prose..
Bon jour, Armand. . .
(If this one could but smile!)

BY PROXY

She longed to hear the Master; I
Longed rather to be near her, feel
The tremor of her lightest sigh
Vibrating to the strings' appeal.

The master-player lifts his bow,
The latest whisper dies away;
Her lips are parted.. Thus I know
That I have heard a Master play.

SISTERS

Out of the dusk a woman's hand;
Out of the night a woman's face;
Brief muttered words I understand
As woman's and the world's disgrace.

Another night. The world seems fair,
A heaven of beings nobly planned:
Soft in the dusk a woman's hair —
Warm in the dusk a woman's hand.

THE HEATH

Nor shall I praise the dream
Called love, nor shall I praise
The wayward beckoning gleam
That o'er the marsh-pool plays.

Nor him shall I extol
Who follows the fickle light;
Deeming his senses soul,
His quest to scale heaven's height.

But—if a rhyme may seem
Fit crown—be his my wreath
Who flies from dream and gleam,
Who mounts from marsh to heath.

For the heath is dry and high,
Wind-swept and cool and sweet;
It does not ape the sky,
But it props a wanderer's feet.

VALENTINE

If you should say to me, "Forget
The world's too finite parapet;
Step with me blithely on where run
Rose paths of many an alien sun;
Thence winging grandly reach with me
Blue meadows of immensity!"
Or should you say to me, "Too far
You range; these homelier regions are
Friendly unto my heart. Then stay,
Friend of my heart, with me to-day". . .

TRUE WOMAN

If you should say these things, I know
God's bliss it were to stay or go:
And if you said them not, I say
It were all one to go or stay.

TRUE WOMAN

Door after door she opened with one key,
Opened and passed and beckoned, and he went
Into each silent chamber well-content:
"These are my own, my very own," said she.
"But, O my lover, now I make you free
"Of these my secret rooms, where I have spent
"My loneliest, happiest hours! The only rent
"I charge you——is to guard my mystery.

"Of opals hidden here speak not abroad;
"Boast not of sapphires gathered without rest,
"How stealthily, and smuggled in my breast
"Hither, from the vast treasuries of God!"
.."Opals?" he murmured, "Sapphires—? *Where*—?"
She crept
Close to him, whispered "Ask me not!"——and wept.

I GUARD MINE OWN

Beloved, another year
Like an industrious spider slowly has spun
Its darkling web, wherein lie drifted all
Our twelvemonth tale of days and deeds and dreams.
Now the o'erloaded film must break, the strands
Fluttering fail into the silt and grime
Of Earth's dim, littered garret-hole, the Past.
O twelvemonth tale of days and deeds and dreams!
Shall love not save
Aught from this annual wreckage, ere the new,
The far more perfect (or the meaner) web
Be bravely anchored to the joists of Time?
Yes, there is something to be saved.. Most dear,
Most true, most equable in ardor, one
Joy must I disentangle and set free
From dust and shadow, one pure memory keep
Bright in my heart through all the untenanted years..
Your touch upon my sleeve, and then a breath
Heard of no ear save mine, the thrill of one
Whispered caress:— *"My husband...."*
Take all the rest
Thou garret-hole, home of discarded selves!
I give you my ambitions and my songs.
Cover them closely with your merciful dust,
Oblivion. They are yours.
I guard mine own.

CONFESSION

This is the man you love... No stainless knight
Unblemished by the world, no paragon
Moved by pure impulse only, no eremite
Lost in lone penances from dawn to dawn;
But such a seeker after truth as scorns
The cant of custom, such an erring heart
As drums to beauty's challenge——ay, and mourns
For beauty vanquished: one who bears his part
In the indifferent tumult of the hour
Indifferently well; best, one who knows
Whither, when adverse currents sap his power,
He may creep homeward to assured repose,—
Even to your feet, that you may bend above
His humbled head... This is the man you love.

THE WOMAN SPEAKS

It lies with you, dear, yours it is to save
My spirit whole and secret from the grave;
If in your heart you hold me still secure
All that I am shall for your sake endure;
My poor perfections still may bless your days,
Even when my feet are silent down old ways
Long trodden by your side.. Yes, hand in hand
We still may journey — if you understand.
It lies within the limits of love's will
To conquer love's malignly lurking foe:
I have not left you, I am with you still,
Inviolate — if you will keep me so.

HIDE AND SEEK

Close your eyes, close your eyes,
Mother, till you've counted ten;
If you find me, you can blind me
And I'll hunt for you again!

Hide and seek...
O little child,
But the fields of God are wide!
How shall I, who have not smiled
Since I vainly strove to "peek",
How shall I
Across the sky
Find the heaven where you hide?

FAITHLESS

Always with that brave smile she greeted him,
Each morning as he kissed her, and again
Each evening as he entered, clean of limb,
Clear-eyed, a warrior from the world of men.
She would not have him think her spirit afraid
Of the environing foes that held her there
Room-ridden, and ever silently she prayed
"Let him not know and suffer".. He kissed her hair,
Her lips, her hands, her brow; he read her eyes
Eagerly for hope's answering gleam; and she

"A PLAGUE ON ALL COWARDS"

Gave him the largesse of love's shining lies
And only when he passed wept bitterly:—
"Ah, I am faithless!" Like a mourning dove's
Soft plaint, she moaned — "Death's kiss were more
than Love's!"

"A PLAGUE ON ALL COWARDS"

Now if the grave indeed be not the grave,
If life be a continuance without end,
Were it not well to send
One's soul forth valorously!
For if the grave be not the grave indeed,
Then God has granted us eternity
To blunder onward till we find our way,
And, finding, save
Haply some tardier seeker in his need
From overmuch confusion, some wild stray
Born of the vagrant breed.
Ourselves are we
Not of the vagrant breed, who ever strive
Just for the moment's bliss?
Ourselves are we safe reckoners of the tide?
Or do we give our slight planks to the gale,
Daring false death because we are alive,
Nor reefing close the sail?

Has Life not been our bride?
When have we shunned her kiss?
Now if indeed the grave be not the grave,
It may be other venturers of old time
(Wielders of sword or makers of swordlike rhyme)
May help us forward, upward, as we climb.
Kit Marlowe there may lend a hand to one
Who died a brawler, but whose heart was brave;
And Louis Stevenson,
God knows! will aid all vagabonds heart and hand!
And many a gallant woman too will stand,
Self-sundered from the sun,
With hopeful word and never-wearying heart
Cheering the stragglers where they faint apart
From those who surelier run.

Ah, if the grave be not indeed the grave,
There is great heart for men who are not strong
In patience, but who waver varyingly
With the wild reef-torn currents of unrest —
Great hope for all who stumble toward the crest
Of being, with vagrom, indecisive feet!
For all who shut their eyes, striving to see —
Singers who break a heart to build a song! —
For wilful laggards as for men more fleet...
Since it is Time alone prevents the knave
From hard-won wisdom that alone can save:—
Time, the false steward of Eternity.

THE SURPRISE

To-day
I have been trudging widely... Overhead
A curtain of dun cloud hung close and dead.
The trodden, pasty streets
Were like the suburbs of some central hell,
Where the half-damned, the wholly wretched, dwell
Till some magnificence of sin completes
Their comfortless probation and they pass
Beyond the eternal gates of flaming brass.
.. How can I tell
The undivided sameness of despair
Spread o'er the city's face; how can I say
The obscene desolation of Broadway!

Such was my mood. The heavy, steaming air
Choked me with dread;
I plodded sullenly as to a grave..
And one beside me said:
"Hey, mister, got a light?"

A light! Could the half-damned thus madly rave?
Had he but asked for darkness!
Then I saw
(My eyes upon his eyes) a Cherub's head,
Such as Carpaccio alone could draw;
So delicately bright,
So tenderly serene;
Beauty without a flaw.

Without a flaw—? ah, no! But had you seen,
Warming the mist, that newsboy's questioning smile,
You would not then have stopped to analyze
The desolate hour's sudden, all-golden prize....

You would have worshipped for a singing while.

MY COUNTRY

My country 'tis of thee... My country? Where
Am I not native to this ragged Fair
Fate holds on Earth, whereto the Unseen bring
Their outworn merchandise for trafficking?
Where tarnished love is sold at fluctuant prices,
Torn virtues bargained for and tattered vices
Struck for a song, where at the current rate
Maids shop for modesty and match for hate;
Where the cast beauty of the nobler stars
Seems worth its bloom in blood and tears and scars;
And one frayed gleaming feather filched from the bright
Unguessed abysses of eternal light
Maddens to avarice, and we are fain
To buy imperfect joy with perfect pain.

O tragic country mine below the sun,
Land of the broken purpose, the half-done,
Half-dreamed, half-ruined towers of the half-hearted,
Land of the faltering vision, the departed
Hope: gay bitter mother-land of men...

MY COUNTRY

Thou hast my soul's allegiance! Brain and pen
Are thine for loyal sonship now and ever.
I am the child of thy confused endeavor,
Thy baffled toil, thy weakness — I am thine!
All that thy tired heart yearns for is divine.
Thou cravest joy that changes not and peace
Unchanging; and thy warring passions cease
Not warring; and the children of thy womb
Burden thy breast with sorrows... 'Tis thy doom,
Sad mother, not unbeautiful to me,
To suffer, blinded by the Mystery,
The Mystery that gave to thee for seed
A race of mighty dream and puny deed,
To suffer for their strangeness, nor to know
Why they must torture thee who love thee so.

Yet from that love which binds us to thy breast
May one day flower the pure-leaved lotos — rest:
Yea, from a love now dark with cruel lust
May flower one day mild asphodels of trust,
White lilies of fulfilment grace thy sod
And deck thee as a garden meet for God
To visit gladly when He walks abroad:—
As once, the fable saith, He deigned to tread
A temporal Eden, long unvisited
Of any save the poets' venturing feet...
Poets who seek blind wasted paths to meet
They know not what of desolated bliss,

And ever fearful lest some sign they miss,
Some sapphire in the dust which still may say
"Once on a time a great King passed this way,
"And from His robe I fell, too slight a thing
"To trouble the proud passing of the King."

FORMERLY

I was a poet once. To-day
How faint the rose within the gray.
Something has changed me, something cold
Has mingled with my blood, the old
Rapturous urge toward loveliness
Has quieted. I tremble less
When the reluctant sun has made
For passion's feet a purple glade,
A glade of quivering purple fire
On to the ramparts of desire.
No longer is my heart oppressed
By the sea's saturnine unrest;
My pulse no longer doubles when
The lurking moon leaps forth again
And with intenser magic fills
Some lonely winding of the hills;
Nor am I shaken inexplicably
By the unyielding mystery
Of shrouded houses and dark doors,
When through a village street there pours
Night's laggard legion blind with rain...

FORMERLY

Oh, utter joy to feel again
The ache of swift imaginings!
The spirit-tumult of mounting wings
Beating a tenuous ether far
Too bright and light to float this star,
This earthy star low-hung and deep
Below the vast where poets sweep
Flame-feathered pinions! Joy to feel
Once more the doubly wingèd heel
Spurn back the sullen weight of time!
Joy to be young again! To rhyme
The ringing changes of the heart!
Joy long passed over. . . Now with art
I strain to half-remember these
Once vivid pangs, brave ecstasies
Sacred to youth and love and song.

Ye blessèd ones who wildly throng
Life's glowing portals, radiant, free,
Press not too swiftly inward! We
Who mount the stairs of memory
Yearn down upon you with regret.
Envy us not that we are set
Above you in life's temple. Wait,
Unwearied ones, by the rose-hung gate
While song's ineffable grace yet clings
To the bright soft plumage of your wings...
Wings ye must fold ere ye advance

Down the strait aisles of circumstance;
Wings ye must shed, alas, ere ye
Cumber the stairs of memory.

THE TWO PRAYERS

"O world, world, world, defend me from thy blaze!
Shelter my heart from thine incessant fire!
Would I in wisdom order all my ways,
Thy myriad flames lick round me, and desire
Slips through my veins quicksilver-like and keen,
And I am hunted from the fields of calm
Into the thickets of extravagant life!
Thy loosely ranging Bacchanals
Stun me with reiterate calls,
Lure me on with flaring torches
Where the ageless Erycine
Sleeks from her celestial hair
Glittering dew that blinds and scorches!
World, withdraw me from her lair,
From her luminous white porches
With voluptuous riot rife!"

Thus cries the tortured heart of youthful song:
But thus it cries not long.

"O world, world, world, chill me not with despair!
Fix not my being in thine icy arms!

HITHER, HYPERION !

Once was I passionate and debonair,
Illustrious in activity, a soul
Winged for imperial flight!
But now, alas, I cower from the light,
Timid, a sensitive creature of alarms.
I am no longer free beyond control
Of sanctimonious convention; I
No longer banish custom in a cry
Sharp with ecstatic life!
Alas, O world, thy colder kin
Have touched me with their finger-tips,
Have kissed my forehead with their lips
Of moonlit snow:
O world, restore me, fan once more within
My muted heart youth's unreluctant glow!
Give me back joy, my too-long-absent wife!"

Thus wails the wasted voice of aged song:
But thus it wails not long.

HITHER, HYPERION !

Come home to me thou truant Soul of Song!
Comfort me with the wafture of thy wings:
Bring me glad dreams and color and flame and dew—
Brief immaterial life-renewing things
Thou only canst renew.

Come home, come swiftly home! Thou tarriest long
In what unguess'd remote felicity.
Yet have some pity on my spirit, and be
(As oft thou hast been) mine, and make me strong
Once more in blithe rewarding minstrelsy!

I ask not, nay I dare not ask thee now,
As once youth-flush'd I asked thee, to abide
Forever radiant-welcome by my side:
I am not worthy of such courtesy.
Ah, had I served thee with a single mind!
Nay, yet in humbleness I ask of thee
One moment's pure renewal of delight...
Then pass me by, striking across my sight
Thy wings' implacable fire! O Song be kind —
Send me Sun-smitten to the Lords of Night!

SONG TRIUMPHANT

I

Magic, magic beneath a wind-flower moon,
  Frail, white, and virgin-shy:
Magic as of some ghostly Druid rune,
Some breathing wraith of enigmatic song,
Droops pallidly upon me as I lie
Soul-shelterless to the wan vesper sky;
Droops mystically upon me — a Lamian tune,

SONG TRIUMPHANT

Secretly humming, as a smitten gong
Troubles the silence when its crashings cease.
So now the soul of peace
Stirs with inaudible pulsation — stirs
To these dumb intricacies
The haunted hours like fearful whisperers
Prolong.

II

The wind-flower moon snatched from its tenuous stem
Falls, blown from heaven; the sky is dark with
dread...
And now the sudden stars are overhead,
Song's diadem!

III

I am fulfilled of song!
No other life save song-life quickens me.
My soul is cadenced as the strophied sea!
Beat of my heart-beats, throng
The intricate rhythms of eternity!
I am a voice, a voice singing — where gleam
Far lights of a far shore,—
"Life is a lyric, for life is a dream;
And all prophetic lore
Rings but a rhyme the more."

IV

Truth, *truth,* ye cry!
But I
Seek not to fix the colored spray,
Seek not to stay
Wave, wind, or gradual star:
To-day
Is mutable as these things are.
Yet the vast sway,
The under-rhythm — God's pulse-beat — shall not fail.
God's song above God's silence shall prevail.

PENULTIMATE

"Life being, as it is," said I,
"A thing unbeautiful and base,
"Surely it were a boon to die"...
Love looked me in the face.

I braved the years, but misery
Stifled my heart with drifting sand:
"Now let my days accursèd be!"...
Love took me by the hand.

Age ate me to the bone, and life
Flaked off from me in horrid drouth;
I whispered, "Let me end this strife"...
Love kissed me on the mouth.

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O GOLDEN AGE DEPARTED

O Golden Age departed,— if indeed
Thou art not one to-day and yesterday;
Or if, more surely than the minds of men,
The future hold thee,—O thou Golden Age
Wherein we feign a lordlier sun, and stars
Of happier influence quickening the night,
And men formed straight and clean of bone and brain
To look upon these with communing eyes,
And women with great eyes less bright than stars,
But lovelier, whose firm limbs no mortal hand
Might hope to chisel from the unyielding block,
Immaculate in beauty... O Golden Age,
Or present, or departed, or to come
(An outer kingdom, or an inner shrine),
Be thou for ever active in my breast,
A constant challenge, a purpose, a desire!
So shall my soul grow worthier, and my song
Fail not in lyric fervor, striving still
To win for me the austere, the wished content
Men seek and find not, beating at thy gates.

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